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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 50/14 of 15 November 1995 concerning cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System (SELA).

2. The Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) wrote to the following organizations of the United Nations system requesting an update of their activities with SELA, to be included in the report of the Secretary-General requested by the General Assembly in resolution 50/14: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Atomic Energy Agency, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Telecommunication Union, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Universal Postal Union, World Bank, World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, United Nations Environment Programme, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, United Nations University (UNU), United Nations Development Fund for Women, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Fourteen of those organizations sent updated information on their cooperation with SELA. Thirteen noted that they did not currently carry out any activities with SELA, although some of them expressed a desire to do so in the future. The following summary is based on the information submitted.

II. Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System

3. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (A/50/438), since the establishment in October 1975 of SELA, considerable cooperation has taken place among United Nations

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organizations, agencies and programmes, especially between ECLAC and SELA.

4. As indicated in that report, such cooperation has intensified over the years and has become more diversified in terms of both the areas of cooperation and the organizations concerned.

5. Cooperation between ECLAC and SELA has consisted, *inter alia*, in the participation of ECLAC and SELA representatives in various meetings of the two institutions and in the preparation by ECLAC of specialized documents in various subject areas in support of SELA activities. Some examples of that cooperation are listed below.

6. In the social sphere, ECLAC has continued to cooperate with SELA in inter-agency activities relating to integrated social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean. In that subject area, the following joint activities have been carried out:

(a) Coordination of economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean project. Beginning in 1994, the Latin American Centre for Development Administration (CLAD), SELA and ECLAC began to carry out the project entitled "Coordination of economic and social policies in Latin America and the Caribbean". The general purpose of the project is to support those in Government, both political and technical officials, who are responsible for social development policies directed at overcoming the acute social imbalances afflicting the region and to help formulate a post-economic adjustment model of development. To accomplish those aims, the project promotes the exchange and analysis of information and experience among countries of the region. It was agreed that the first step would be the conceptual and methodological analysis of the problem from three complementary perspectives. This resulted in the preparation of three technical documents on integrated economic and social policies; State, society and poverty in Latin America: towards a new linkage of economic and social policy; and the experience with adjustment during the decade of the eighties in Latin America, its impact on income distribution and the design of social policies. The first phase of the project concluded with a meeting of experts (Cartagena, Colombia, June 1995) to discuss those documents, which were prepared by CLAD, SELA and ECLAC. The second phase of the project, in which UNESCO also participated, culminated in an inductive exercise in which lessons applicable to the design and implementation of integrated or coordinated social development policies in Latin America and the Caribbean were drawn from an examination of concrete experiences. The exercise culminated in a seminar/workshop on coordination of economic and social policies (La Paz, 9-11 October 1996), organized in collaboration with the Millennium Foundation. It was agreed that joint activities would be continued in 1997; a meeting is scheduled for November 1997 on efficacy in social policy, to be organized by SELA, CLAD and UNESCO;

(b) Social aspects of integration project. In 1996, ECLAC, together with SELA and other organizations in the region, began carrying out activities to facilitate inter-agency coordination on the social agenda of integration. Two such meetings were held at Caracas, from 3 to 7 March 1997. The first, organized by the Training Centre for Regional Integration (CEFIR) and SELA, was on the topic of regional integration and the challenges of competitiveness and convergence. ECLAC presented a paper on labour markets, convergence and competitiveness. The second event, also organized by CEFIR and SELA in consultation with other organizations in the region, took the form of a workshop on the social aspects of integration, in which the participants (the Institute for Latin American Integration, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), the Board of the Cartagena Agreement, the Andean Development Corporation and CLAD, CEFIR and SELA) exchanged information and views on their activities in the social sphere, identified promising areas for inter-agency cooperation in that area and considered means for improving coordination. It was agreed that inter-agency coordination could be pursued by creating an interactive electronic mail network for information-sharing to serve as the medium for inter-agency contacts; preparing an inventory of social programmes and projects; conducting joint human resource training activities; expanding to the rest of the region the system developed by CEFIR for observing the behaviour of social actors in integration; and comparing the various work programmes in order to identify issues appropriate for inter-agency cooperation. In follow-up to the workshop, ECLAC prepared and distributed a bibliography on social aspects of integration from data to be found in ECLAC databases;

(c) Tasks involved in organizing and conducting the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development. Pursuant to commitment 10 (b) of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the ECLAC secretariat did substantive and procedural work in preparation for the First Regional Conference in Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development (São Paulo, Brazil, 6-9 April 1997). The Conference was co-sponsored by the following organizations: Organization of American States (OAS), UNDP, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UNICEF, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and SELA. In

developing a work plan and determining the ultimate structure of the meeting, ECLAC maintained close contact and held meetings with focal points designated by each organization. Preparatory missions were conducted to the host country to complete the substantive and logistical arrangements for the regional conference.

7. The Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) also coordinated its programme activities with SELA through regular contacts with SELA officials and staff members.

8. In the area of international trade, transport and financing, ECLAC organized the second LAIA/ECLAC/SELA Meeting of Trade Policy Officials of Latin America and the Caribbean, (Caracas, February 1996). The third such meeting took place at Montevideo in October 1996, and the fourth meeting is scheduled for September 1997 in Santiago. The purpose of the meetings is to provide the officials with a forum for debating the subject and proposing measures to improve and coordinate trade policy in the region.

9. ECLAC also participated in the following: the technical working group on trends in the globalization process and scenarios for world change, sponsored by SELA (Buenos Aires, 29 January 1996); the meeting organized by SELA and the Venezuelan Institute for Social and Political Research on the socio-political agenda of the Caribbean Basin's integration process (Caracas, 11-14 February 1996); the technical workshop on intellectual property in the Uruguay Round, also organized by SELA (Mexico City, 20 May 1996); the intensive course on trade negotiations and WTO, organized by SELA (Mexico City, 26 August-6 September 1996); the Second Meeting on Competition Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the permanent secretariat of SELA, the Venezuelan Superintendency for the Promotion and Protection of Competition and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, with the collaboration of UNCTAD (Caracas, 27-29 November 1996) and the second course on Central American integration, organized jointly with SELA (Tegucigalpa, 19-22 November 1996).

10. In the area of industrial policy, ECLAC participated with SELA in a number of meetings, among them:

(a) The first meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, organized by SELA and UNIDO (San José, 27 and 28 October 1994);

(b) Seminar on work organization, technology and human resources in the restructuring process (Caracas, 2-4 September 1996) at which ECLAC presented a paper on in-house training and education;

(c) Expert workshop on industrial policy (Caracas, 16 and 17 September 1996) at which ECLAC presented a paper on the status of policies for industrial competitiveness in Latin America and the Caribbean in the mid-1990s;

(d) Seminar on regional integration and the challenges of competitiveness and convergence, organized by SELA and CEFIR (Caracas, 3-6 March 1997). ECLAC participated in the round table on convergence and competitiveness policies, presenting a paper on industrial competitiveness policies in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1990s, and in the closing round table of the seminar;

(e) The second meeting of the Regional Forum on Industrial Policy, organized by SELA and UNIDO (Caracas, 31 July and 1 August 1997). ECLAC participated in the round tables on industry, technology, training and job creation and on experiences in implementing industrial or competitiveness policies.

11. ECLAC also had a number of working meetings with SELA officials to assess the design and organization of earlier meetings, particularly those on industrial policy.

12. To date there are no formal cooperation programmes between FAO and SELA. However, the two organizations have had frequent contact in the biennium 1996-1997. FAO representatives attended and made presentations at several meetings organized by SELA, including the meeting preparatory to the ninth session of UNCTAD (Midrand, South Africa, 27 April-11 May 1996) and the workshop organized jointly by SELA and IDB on market access issues in the Uruguay Round (Cartagena, Colombia, January 1996). At the workshop, which was attended by representatives of 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries, FAO presented a document on legal provisions relating to agricultural products, which discussed sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, subsidy provisions and their implications, tariffs and the opportunities and challenges entailed in provisions for agriculture in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

13. Moreover, FAO, together with SELA, is establishing a framework for cooperation under the regional programme on vegetal germ plasm and the biotechnology and food security projects.

14. The possibility of further strengthening cooperation was recently discussed during the visit of the Permanent Secretary of SELA to the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in early April 1997. On that occasion, major areas of cooperation, such as food security,

trade policy in connection with the Uruguay Round and competitiveness, were identified.

15. Cooperation between WTO and SELA has continued through regional and national seminars, technical missions, workshops and meetings organized in SELA member States, all of which dealt with WTO and the Uruguay Round agreements. WTO is confident that those activities will reinforce cooperation between WTO and SELA members in the implementation of the Uruguay Round results.

16. Under the SELA/ILO cooperation programme, the ILO Inter-American Research and Documentation Centre on Vocational Training (CINTERFOR) participated in a workshop on training and development of human resources for competitiveness (Caracas, July 1995).

17. SELA, under the auspices of CINTERFOR, UNDP and the Latin American Institute for Social Research, organized a workshop for specialists (Caracas, September 1996), on productive modernization, training of human resources and labour relations to promote an exchange of national experiences on those important issues within the globalization process. CINTERFOR presented a paper entitled "Labour ministries and vocational training". ILO provided a list of the most renowned labour relations specialists in the region to be invited to the event.

18. ILO was invited to participate in the SELA workshop on social dimensions of integration (Caracas, March 1997). Although it could not send a representative, ILO sent relevant documentation to the SELA secretariat, namely, a report prepared for the ILO Governing Body entitled "Social dimensions of the liberalization of international trade", a copy of the ILO Director-General's statement on employment to the meeting of the Group of Seven Industrialized Countries at Lille, France, in April 1996, the first chapter of *World Employment 1996/1997* and a working document entitled, "Labour dimensions of economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean".

19. IMF has continued its cooperation with SELA in areas of common interest in its area of competence and jurisdiction.

20. Although IMO has not yet arranged cooperation activities with SELA, it reported that it would be pleased to explore whether cooperation could be arranged in the maritime and port sectors.

21. WMO welcomed General Assembly resolution 50/14. Since meteorology and operational hydrology are basic for economic development, it fully agreed with the need, expressed in paragraph 4 of the resolution, for intensifying support for and cooperation in the activities conducted by SELA in the fields of interest of WMO.

22. Cooperation between UNESCO and SELA has been highly satisfactory and is a fine example of the synergy and enrichment that can be achieved through intellectual cooperation. There were important instances of cooperation even before the signing of an agreement between the two organizations on 28 July 1988, as there have been since.

23. One of those instances was the joint initiative of UNESCO, SELA, ECLAC and other international organizations in the late 1980s in creating the Inter-Agency Group on Integrated Social Policies, whose fine performance helped to enrich the contribution the participating organizations were able to make to the process leading up to the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995). That experiment in working together also led to the project in which UNESCO is now involved concerning coordination of economic and social policies. Another project may soon be started related to growth and employment, which has been declared a priority issue by the SELA Latin American Council.

24. UNESCO and SELA have been cooperating in the last few years in such spheres as world change, technological prospects, intellectual property and the development of craft micro-enterprises. In recent months, the two organizations have been working, among other things, on "Project Demos", which has yielded interesting results in the areas of coordination of economic and social policies — a major publication on the topic is soon to appear — and higher education. In the latter area, UNESCO and SELA worked closely on organizing and conducting the Regional Conference on Policies and Strategies for Transforming Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Cuba, November 1996), and in the process identified new possibilities for collaboration between their organizations.

25. Another cooperative activity between UNESCO and SELA now in progress is the programme of communication for integration in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has so far yielded the following results: creation and start-up of a network of Latin American economic dailies; design and development of the intra- and interregional information network for disseminating data on subject areas within the purview of SELA; publication of the SELA newsletter in Spanish and English; strengthening of the information and documentation system for organizations involved in cooperation and integration in Latin America and the Caribbean; and production of a series of radio programmes on integration in the region. In addition, two books are in preparation on the subject of communication and integration.

26. In addition to close inter-agency ties, reciprocal attendance on official occasions and cooperation on a variety of technical activities, seminars and meetings, a particularly significant feature of UNESCO and SELA cooperation is that it has included not only regional, subregional and other international organizations, but also agents from civil society, such as the members of the communication media, in their joint action, thereby making it an important promoter and catalyst in the service of development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

27. There are plans in the next biennium to develop a new line of cooperation, using SELA as a base of operations, that will relate to the implications of globalization for the development of the cultural industries of the Latin American and Caribbean countries.

28. UNIDO has carried out a number of activities in collaboration with SELA. It has, for example, co-sponsored the following meetings: a symposium on the link between technical and economic cooperation held on the occasion of the Eleventh Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation (Mexico City, 20-22 May 1996); the SELA workshop for industrial policy experts (Caracas, 16 and 17 September 1996); the twenty-second regular meeting of the SELA Latin American Council on the topic of the integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 22-25 October 1996); and a regional seminar organized by the Brazilian Assistance Service for Micro- and Small Enterprises (São Paulo, 29 October-1 November 1996). UNIDO contributed by presenting an overview of the topics discussed and their potential application to the Latin American context.

29. The World Bank has been engaged in a process of elaborating the priorities for accelerating growth and reducing poverty in the countries of the region. The results of the project were summarized in a publication presented at the Third Annual Bank Conference on Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo, 29 June-1 July 1997). An essential part of the Bank's future work in the region will be enhanced consultations with others active in pursuing the regional development agenda, as are ECLAC and SELA.

30. WHO has closely followed the activities of SELA in its capacity as a regional organization. In that regard, it has accompanied SELA at the annual meetings of heads of external cooperation of the countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the most recent of which was held at Antigua, Guatemala, in May 1997.

31. In June 1995 WIPO prepared and sent to the SELA permanent secretariat, at its request, an informative document entitled "Recent trends in industrial property legislation at the regional and international levels", in which it discussed the main developments in the field of industrial property at regional and international levels during the last few years. The document was distributed during the ministerial phase of the twenty-first regular meeting of the Latin American Council (San Salvador, 12 and 13 July 1995).

32. Two WIPO officials delivered lectures at the SELA Regional Seminar on the Interpretation and Application of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, 28 and 29 June 1995).

33. WIPO also conducted the Latin American and Caribbean Symposium on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights in cooperation with the Government of Venezuela and with the assistance of the permanent secretariat of SELA (13-15 May 1997). The purpose of the Symposium was to discuss the implications of the Agreement for countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region that are party to the Agreement and was addressed to officials from ministries of trade and industry, ministries of foreign affairs and industrial property and copyright administrations of those countries.

34. In June 1997 the Permanent Secretary of SELA, accompanied by another SELA official, visited WIPO in Geneva and talked with the Director General and other WIPO officials on strengthening cooperation between the two organizations.

35. UNDP has been financing a project with SELA that funds several initiatives providing technical assistance in selected areas, primarily trade. The UNDP/SELA programme is nearing completion, and future discussions will be governed to a large extent by the more specific determination of future common priorities.

36. Under the regional project entitled "Support to SELA", which was a five-year effort carried out between 1992 and 1997, a number of activities were conducted in three major areas: external economic relations, industrialization and technological development and regional cooperation and integration.

37. UNCTAD has continued its collaboration with SELA. In early 1996, SELA assisted UNCTAD in organizing the consultation and coordination meeting that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries held at Caracas in order to discuss their positions for the ninth session of UNCTAD. UNCTAD and SELA held joint advisory and consultative meetings with the Group at Geneva and Caracas

in order to assist them in the preparation of their negotiating agenda for the WTO Ministerial Conference (Singapore, 9-13 December 1996.

38. UNCTAD and SELA are continuing their cooperation in setting the guidelines for future collaboration in the execution of the successor to the LATINTRADE project, which was intended to enhance the negotiating capacity of the Latin American and Caribbean countries to enable them to participate more effectively in trade agreements. Funds are currently being sought to finance the successor project.

39. UNICEF, as in the past, has participated in some of the events organized by SELA, and the two organizations have exchanged information and analyses.

40. WFP will be developing in the near future more structured impact-evaluation systems for WFP-assisted projects and would welcome stronger ties with SELA.

41. Although UNU has had no specific cooperation activities with SELA during the reporting period, it would be willing to establish and foster such cooperation.

42. As part of its work as the regional focal point for technical cooperation among developing countries, since 1980 the permanent secretariat has been organizing region-wide meetings of directors of international technical cooperation as a means of consolidating the mechanism for technical cooperation in the region by strengthening the management capacity of national focal points. The institutionalization of this forum reaffirms the importance which the Latin American and Caribbean countries attach to consultation, coordination and consensus-building in relation to technical cooperation policies and activities they implement at the international, bilateral, joint and regional levels. Such actions are taken in response to international events and seek to optimize the use of the technical and financial resources available in the region. To the same end, since 1980 the Coordination Mechanism for Regional Bodies and Forums Engaged in TCDC Activities has also been institutionalized within the framework of SELA. Participants in the mechanism include many bodies and agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations, such as ECLAC, PAHO/WHO, UNIDO, the International Organization for Migration, the permanent secretariat of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration, IDB, OAS, UNDP, CARICOM, the World Bank, LAIA, the Latin American Association of Development Financing Institutions, the Association of Caribbean States, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the Andean Development Corporation, the European Union (EU), FAO, ILPES, the Board of the Cartagena Agreement, Mercosur, the Bolívar Programme, UNCTAD and UNESCO. Such meetings have reinforced the regular activities of each of those organizations and have facilitated the coordination of specific sectoral initiatives undertaken at the regional level with a view to channelling efforts and available resources towards priority areas identified by the Governments.

43. In pursuit of that objective, SELA organized the following meetings with the assistance of its member States and the above-mentioned organizations and with the financial and technical support of the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries of UNDP: a masters' workshop on innovative experiments in the mobilization of technical cooperation resources (Santiago, 2-6 October 1995), a programming and negotiation exercise in support of Haiti (Port-au-Prince, 22-24 November 1995), a symposium on the linkage of technical and economic cooperation and the Eleventh Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation (Mexico City, 20-22 May 1996), a seminar/workshop on small and medium-scale enterprises: a strategic challenge for globalization and a seminar on the private sector and international cooperation: a strategic dialogue for competitive integration (São Paulo, Brazil, 28-31 October 1996), a symposium on the role of technical cooperation among developing countries as a support mechanism for decentralization processes in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Twelfth Meeting of Directors of International Technical Cooperation (Antigua, Guatemala, 19-22 May 1997). Both ECLAC and UNIDO played a very active role in the analysis of the subject of small and medium-scale enterprises. Participants figuring prominently in the discussions on decentralization included ECLAC, CLAD, UNDP, IDB, the World Bank, EU and others.

III. Conclusion

44. It is important to emphasize that cooperation between SELA and the programmes, organizations and agencies of the United Nations is growing and diversifying, and inter-agency cooperation has been established in many areas in which optimal use is being made of existing resources for the benefit of the countries of the region.